GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3211
ANSWERED ON:21.03.2007
VISIT OF ITALIAN PRIME MINISTER TO INDIA
Budholiya Shri Rajnarayan

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a). whether the Prime Minister of Italy visited India recently; and

(b). if so, the details of the discussions held and the outcome thereof?

Answer

MINISTER OF THE STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE)

(a)&(b) Yes. The Prime Minister of Italy, Dr. Romano Prodi paid a state visit to India from February 10-15 2007. Dr. Prodi was accompanied by three Ministers - Ms. Emma Bonino, Minister for International Trade and European Affairs, Mr. Antonio Di Pietro, Minister for Infrastructure and Ms. Rosy Bindi, Minister for Family Policies and a large business delegation.

The discussions held on the occasion covered a wide range of areas of bilateral and multilateral cooperation including economic and commercial links (especially among Small & Medium Enterprises), cooperation in the fields of combating terrorism, energy security, space research, defence, design, food processing and cultural & educational exchanges.

The following agreements were signed during the visit:

i) Cultural Exchange Programme 2007-09;
ii) MOU on Renewable Energy Cooperation; and
iii) MOU on setting up a Joint Working Group on Combating International Terrorism & Transnational Crime.

A Joint Statement was issued at the end of the visit (copy enclosed).

JOINT STATEMENT ON THE OCCASION OF THE VISIT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF ITALY, PROF. ROMANO PRODI TO INDIA REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (A) & (B) OF LOK SABHA UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3211 REGARDING 'VISIT OF ITALIAN PRIME MINISTER TO INDIA' FOR ANSWER ON 21/03/2007

Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh, and President of the Council of Ministers of Italy, Prof. Romano Prodi, today affirmed their commitment to work towards the establishment of a strategic partnership based on the close understanding and excellent political dialogue between the two countries, and enhanced cooperation on economy and trade, defense, culture, science & technology, higher education and research, space and the environment.

Both sides agreed to hold regular meetings between the respective Prime Ministers, to take place alternately, in India and Italy. They stressed the importance of the ongoing annual consultations at the level of Ministers of Foreign Affairs and regular consultations at the level of senior officials of the two Foreign Ministries.

Both sides emphasized the importance of increasing bilateral trade and investment flows in order to realize the significant potential that exists and reiterated their commitment to facilitate business exchanges so that bilateral trade could substantially increase in the next three years.

The economic events held in Delhi, Bangalore, Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai during the visit have promoted interaction between businesses on both sides and opened up new opportunities for enhancing cooperation in the sectors of agri-business, textiles and clothing, leather, jewellery, woodwork and machine tools, automotive and auto-components, energy, fashion, design, cinema and infrastructure.

Both sides agreed on the need to enhance engagement between SMEs. Considering the success of the Italian industrial cluster model for growth of the manufacturing sector, they agreed to facilitate exchange of experiences and training on the Italian model.

The two sides noted that there were complementarities between the two countries to further develop cooperation in the area of design. Italian strengths in design and technology could be combined with India's manufacturing competencies and human resource skills for mutual benefit. A centre of Excellence in design education will be set up jointly by India and Italy at the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad (India).

Recognising the benefits of closer cooperation in fostering the protection and promotion of intellectual property rights, the two leaders agreed that both sides would work together to cooperate in the areas of capacity building activities, human resource development and public awareness programme.

The services sector has the potential of further contributing to the strengthening of economic relations. They noted with satisfaction the positive developments in this regard and the setting up of innovative financial instruments by the Italian banking sector to facilitate direct investments and joint ventures.

The leaders were presented with the recommendations of the first meeting of the Indo-Italian CEOs Forum held in New Delhi on 15th February 2007. Both sides expressed the hope that the work of this Forum would help increase bilateral trade and investment linkages.

The two sides welcomed the establishment of the Joint Working Group on Infrastructure and looked forward to active cooperation in this sector. They also decided to strengthen cooperation in the field of Information Technology.

Food processing is another area of ongoing bilateral cooperation. The two sides are exploring the possibility of working together to establish a Joint Food Testing Laboratory at Kolkata; set up an Indo-Italian Joint Foundation for Food Processing and developing an Agro Food Park.

The two parties noted with appreciation the positive results of the bilateral executive programme on scientific and technological cooperation and the high level of cooperation attained by Universities, research centers and public and private institutions of the two countries and agreed to enhance it further. They noted with satisfaction the ongoing Indo-Italian cooperation at the Synchrotron in Trieste and the relevant results of the joint ITPAR (India-Trento Program for Advanced Research) Project in Microsystems, Material Science, Computer Science and Telecommunications. They further agreed to continue to support the activities of the ICGEB (International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology).

Italy is an important partner for India in space research. The two sides agreed to further increase cooperation between ASI (Agenzia Spatiale Italiana) and the ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation) and welcomed the installation of the Thermo Vacuum Chamber at ISRO Satellite Centre in Bangalore and the forthcoming launch of the "Agile" Satellite by PSLV (Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle).

They agreed that the defense sector presents opportunities for increased cooperation.

Cultural cooperation has always been at the forefront of relations between the two countries. The two sides welcomed the signing of the Cultural Exchange Programme for 2007-2009, and agreed to enhance cooperation and exchanges, inter alia, in music, contemporary art, design, restoration and the preservation of historical heritage and cinema. They further agreed to strengthen their cooperation against illegal trafficking of cultural assets and to encourage academic exchanges between universities.

The two sides underlined the importance of fostering an increase of tourism to both countries, facilitating contacts and increasing direct air links. The two leaders reiterated their commitment to work jointly in addressing global challenges and noted the scope for increased bilateral cooperation in the field of environment and the protection of natural resources. They welcomed the bilateral MoU for cooperation in new and renewable energy technologies.

Both sides reiterated their commitment to a rules-based multi-lateral trading system and noted the importance of a positive and balanced outcome of the Doha Round of negotiations consistent with the mandate.

Both Heads of Government reaffirmed the vital importance of an effective multilateral system. They expressed their firm support for a reformed and more efficient United Nations and agreed to regular consultations on UN matters.

The two leaders re-affirmed their commitment to disarmament and non-proliferation objectives and supported renewed efforts of the international community to achieve them. Italy and India confirmed their willingness to work together in the relevant international fora to this end.

The two leaders stressed the importance of energy security. Italy recognized the rising demand for energy in India and the need for international cooperation in this domain. They agreed to continue to discuss the need to adopt forward-looking approaches to enhance international civil nuclear cooperation under appropriate IAEA safeguards with India.

They welcomed the establishment of a bilateral Joint Working Group on combating international terrorism and transnational crime. Italy and India will continue to cooperate on the implementation of the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy, work towards an expeditious adoption of a comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.

Both sides underlined the importance of cooperation on the United Nations activities for peace support and post conflict stabilization. In this context, they welcomed the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) at the UN and agreed to continue their cooperation in PBC's Organizational Committee of which both India and Italy are members.

Both sides welcomed the enhanced cooperation between India and Italy through the participation of Indian personnel in the training programmes of CoESPU (the Carabinieri-run Centre of Excellence for Stability Police Units) in Vicenza, Italy, which has been mutually beneficial.

The two leaders agreed to work together in further strengthening the bilateral relationship, also in the context of the Strategic Partnership between India and the European Union. In this regard, they reaffirmed their strong commitment to the full implementation of the comprehensive and forward looking Joint Action Plan, aimed at creating further opportunities for closer political and economic

cooperation. They looked forward to the early launch of negotiations for the broad based India-EU Trade and Investment Agreement.

The two leaders exchanged views on regional issues of mutual interest (including South Asia, Afghanistan, Iran, Middle East and Lebanon) and the forthcoming meeting of the G8 and partner countries.

Both sides expressed deep satisfaction with the outcome of the visit, which both sides agreed was successful and represented the beginning of a new phase in the growing partnership between India and Italy.

Invitations were extended to the Hon'ble President and Prime Minister of India to pay official visits to Italy. These were accepted with thanks. Dates will be settled through diplomatic channels.

New Delhi
15th February 2007